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ALEA's Spring Safety Message is Simple: Think Smart Before You Start

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) is kicking off its second annual Think Smart Before You Start spring safety campaign as students of all ages and their families prepare for the end of the school year festivities such as spring break, prom and the upcoming graduation season. Ideally, parents will set aside time with their teens to ensure safety is always part of their plans whatever the event or function.

With the school year winding down and the weather warming up, end of the year events will soon be in full swing, Alabama citizens should plan for and expect heavier than normal traffic on roadways across the entire state. ALEA Troopers encourage parents to take the opportunity to discuss the importance of obeying all traffic laws and explain the consequences of driving distracted or impaired.

ALEA Secretary Hal Taylor said, "This is one of the busiest times of the year, particularly for families that are participating in spring break or end of the school year functions. For high school and college students these events can be considered a rite of passage, in many instances this could be the first time traveling without their parent or chaperones. We certainly encourage everyone to think smart before you start and fully understand that the choices and decisions you make while behind the wheel can affect your life as well as the lives of others. There is never a right time to do the wrong thing, everyone must obey and follow all laws when operating motor vehicles on Alabama's roadways."

The same can be said for prom season, when many young inexperienced drivers will be on Alabama's roadways traveling to and from proms or other school-related functions. Therefore, ALEA Public Affairs Officers partnered with local communities across the state and participated in a variety of prom promise events that reenforced the importance of sound decision making during this exciting time of the year. Secretary Taylor reminds parents to be aware of the hazards associated with many of the functions and festivities surrounding this time of year.

Secretary Taylor added spring break travelers of all ages and those heading out right after graduation should plan their routes and inspect their vehicles to ensure they are functioning properly and are fully equipped with roadside emergency kits, water and other essentials. Several Alabama roadways are popular among out-of-state travelers headed to the beach for spring break and/or following graduation. ALEA Troopers will focus their enforcement efforts through the end of May on traffic violations that frequently contribute to crashes that result in injury and in some cases death. Priority during this

enforcement period will be speeding violations, following too closely, impaired drivers and making improper lane changes as well as those not wearing seat belts and children who are unrestrained.

One of the many goals of the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency is to prevent crashes in order to save lives, Secretary Taylor said. “All we ask is that everyone “Think Smart Before You Start.”

Seven Spring Safety Tips

1. **Safety first!** Review the law and discuss safety before your teens make plans for spring break, prom or graduation; and be sure you are aware of the route they will take, estimated arrival times, etc.
2. **Buckle Up – no matter how short the trip.** Everyone in the vehicle must buckle up.
3. **Cell phones down.** The driver must forget all distractions and focus on driving.
4. **Obey the law.** The driver must follow speed limits, do not follow too closely, do not make illegal lane changes, use the left lane for passing and move over for emergency vehicles.
5. **No DUI!** Hand over the keys if you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. (Did you know over-the-counter and prescription drugs can have the same effect as alcoholic beverages?)
6. **Have the conversation.** Parents take the opportunity to share with your children how the consequences of their decisions can affect not only their lives but the lives of others, “never a right time to do the wrong thing.”
7. **Monitor your teens if alcoholic beverages are around, particularly during prom and graduation seasons.** Prior to the prom and/or graduation gatherings, remind teens not to accept rides from anyone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. (Discuss a Plan B should this occur, whether it is to call home for a ride or to call a ride-share service.)